

MAKING INFORMAL ARGUMENTS

SAMPLE TEXT SET: REALITY TV

In this mini-unit, students will read and respond to three different texts centered on Reality TV. The goal of the mini-unit is to support students as they gather information from text, consider multiple angles on a topic, develop a nuanced claim, and write a complete draft. The steps are listed below and can be stretched out across 3 – 10 days depending on time.

I. SET-UP

- Students turn to a new page in their notebook, opening it so there is both a left and right side visible.
- Title the right side WRITING and the left side READING. (This optional step is a management tool to help students keep their writing separate from their reading. However, many students are able to simply read and write in layers one after another.)

II. QUICK-WRITE

- Students and teachers respond to the words: *Reality TV*
This response is a first reaction to what we think about Reality TV so it can be about their interaction with Reality TV, how they feel about Reality TV, what they've heard about Reality TV...
- Students start this quick-write as the first entry on the writing side. This first writing is to acknowledge that we come to an idea, topic, or issue with a gut claim, feeling, or belief.

III. TEXT #1

- Teacher shows the image of a Reality TV advertisement.
[Dance Moms 2011 Image: imdb.com](http://www.imdb.com)
- Reading Directions:
 - In the reading side of the notebook, students record:
What they see – images, words, colors, placement...
What they are thinking about Reality TV based on the image.
- Provide between 5 – 10 minutes to record and respond.
- Share thinking in a discussion.

IV. ADD TO WRITING

- Students add to their initial writing about Reality TV with new information from the image. Guide students to include specific details from the image as they add to their writing.
- Before doing that, as a class, brainstorm sentence frames that we might use to add to our writing:
The image makes me question...
Now I am thinking...
I'm wondering...
Just as I was thinking earlier...
- Provide 5 – 10 minutes for students to add on to their writing in their notebook.
- Discuss.

V. TEXT #2

- Teacher adds another layer of thinking by providing a text with a different perspective. This text summarizes a survey conducted by the Girl Scout Research Institute on the influences of Reality TV on pre-teen and teen girls. There is both an article and a list to from which to choose.

["Girls and Reality TV Are a Potent Combo, Girl Scouts Report Says"](#)
LA Times. October 2011.

[Real to Me: Girls and Reality TV – Girl Scouts Research](#)
Real to Me: Girls and Reality TV (fact sheet) – Girl Scouts of America

- Reading Directions:
 - Students code the text as they read.
 - * *Star key insights from the research.*
 - F *Use an F for a fact that seems important or compelling.*
- Students then respond to two to three of their codes in their reading notes. Ask students to write what the text said and why they think it matters when thinking about Reality TV.

VI. ADD TO WRITING

- Students add to their writing about Reality TV with new information from the research. Guide students to include references to specific insights and facts from the research as they add to their writing.

- Before doing that, as a class, add on to the list of sentence frames we might use to add to our writing:
On the other hand...
A different way of looking at...
This _____ makes me wonder...
Further supporting my thinking is...
Something I never considered is...
- Provide 5 – 10 minutes for students to add to their writing and then discuss.
- The rationale behind adding to our thinking through layers of reading and writing is to help students connect texts, consider a variety of perspectives and angles and perhaps change our claims as we gather more information.

VII. TEXT #3

- Teacher adds another layer of thinking by providing a text with a different perspective. This text presents an argument favoring Reality TV by TIME TV critic James Poniewozlk.

["Why Reality TV Is the New Family TV"](#)

TIME.com. James Poniewozlk. May 2013.

- Reading Directions:
 - Students read the text once, underlining lines or thoughts that stuck out to them because they supported, challenged, or extended their thinking about Reality TV.
 - Students read the text again this time coding the text for argument elements:
 - C – Claim being made
 - R – Reasons
 - E – Evidence or Explanation
 - CC – Counterclaim
- Provide 10 -15 minutes for students to read and code.
- Students then respond to two to three of their underlines or codes in their reading notes. Ask students to record what the text says and then their response to the comment. Using an It Says/I say T-chart is an easy way for students to record what the text says and what they think in response.

It Says (Students write actual lines from the text here)	I Say (Students record their response and thinking to the text lines)

- Provide 5 – 10 minutes for students to record their responses.

VIII. ADD TO WRITING

- Students add to their writing about Reality TV with new information from the argument article. Guide students to include references to specific lines as they add to their writing.
- Before doing that, as a class, add to the list of sentence frames we might use to add to our writing:
 - I understand,... However, I still...*
 - In some ways I still believe...but...*
 - Although the article states...*
 - I used to think,... but now I am thinking...*
- Provide 5 – 10 minutes to add to writing.

IX. WRITE A CLAIM

- After layering through a set of texts, students are ready to write a claim about the topic. The writing they have done provides patterns of thinking for them to find a claim that is more than yes/no or pro/con.

- Students look through their writing and reading notes and write a claim regarding Reality TV.
- If necessary, provide students with hedging language that is often used in academic writing such as: *probably, usually, likely, should, most likely, and often*.
- As further support for the claim, students make notes under their claim referencing the texts and support they will use to develop their claim.

X. ORGANIZE AND DRAFT

- Students will use the material they gathered from the texts, their writing and their claim to draft an argument essay.
- One way to support this is to provide possible structures for organization that make sense when making an argument and then provide students with the time to transfer their thinking to an extended essay format.
- Using the MOVES WRITERS MAKE WHEN THEY ORGANIZE AN OPINION, adapted from Gretchen Bernabei's Kernel Essays handout (found in Additional Resources), the teacher can model how to think through possible organizational structures and decide on one for drafting.
- Students draft.

XI. TEACH AND REVISE AS NECESSARY

- Depending on your focus or the needs in the classroom, provide specific teaching and revision around the elements of an argument essay: claim, reasons, support, evidence, and source development.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Additional Texts to vary reading level and perspective:

<http://learnit.st/users/415852/boards/75141-reality-tv>

MOVES WRITERS MAKE WHEN THEY ORGANIZE AN OPINION:

(Based on Gretchen Bernabei's Kernel Essays)

A:



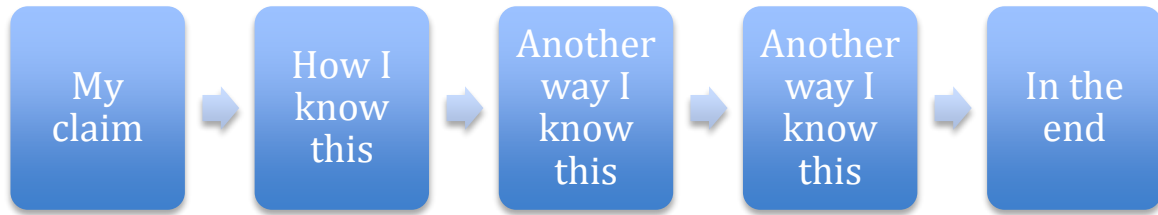
B.



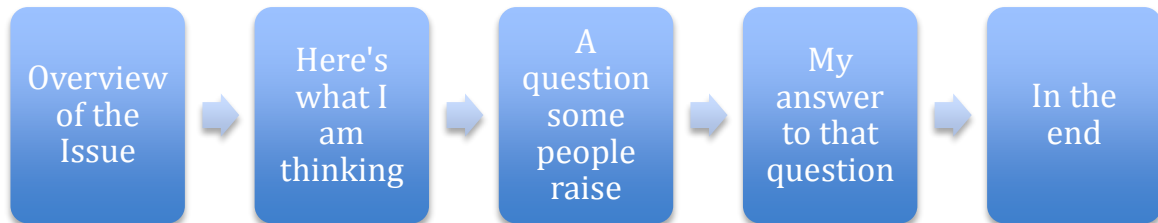
C.



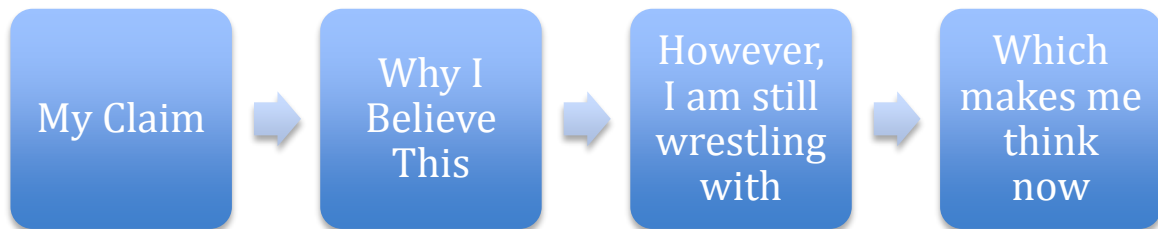
D.



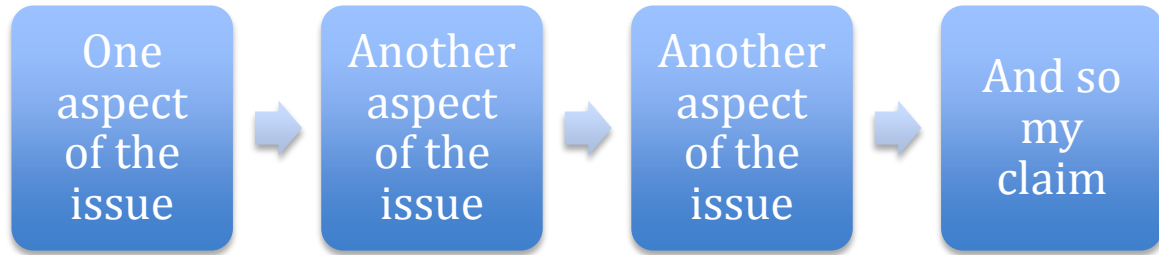
E.



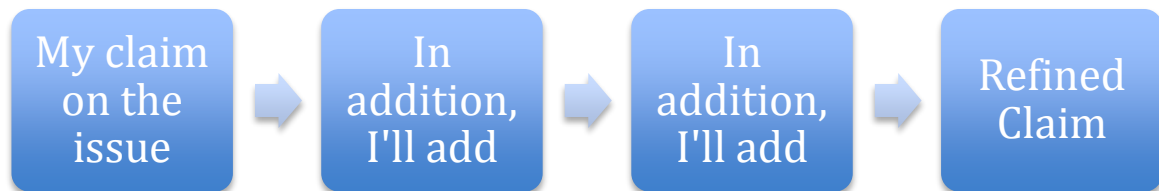
F.



G.



H.



The focus of the National Writing Project's College-Ready Writers Program (CRWP) is the teaching and learning of source-based argument writing that draws on non-fiction texts. As part of the program, local Writing Project sites provide intensive professional development and specially developed resources for teachers as teachers help their students become skilled at writing arguments from non-fiction sources. The CRWP resources and tools have been developed collaboratively by experienced teachers of writing who are part of the National Writing Project network. The purpose of sharing already created resources is to support teachers and students in developing source-based arguments and to study the underlying teaching practices. Ultimately, teachers are invited to adapt and create their own mini-units which may be modeled upon these resources.

The CRWP National Leadership Team, which has led the creation of a number of CRWP instructional resources, includes Rachel Bear, Boise State Writing Project; Linda Denstaedt, Oakland (MI) Writing Project; Casey Olsen, Montana Writing Project; Beth Rimer, Ohio Writing Project; and Jean Wolph, Louisville Writing Project, as well as NWP staff.

This mini-unit was developed by Beth Rimer.

Funding for the National Writing Project's College-Ready Writers Program is provided by the U.S. Department of Education's Investing in Innovation (i3) Grant Competition Program, with additional funding from The Rural School and Community Trust and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.